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Historical view of the
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A

HISTORICAL VIEW

OF

THE COUNCIL OF NICE,

WITH A TRANSLATION OF

DOCUMENTS.

BY THE REV. ISAAC BOYLE, A. M.

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P R E F A C E .

THE ecclesiastical history of Eusebius extends only to A. D. 324. The Council of Nice was convened the following year. The publisher of Eusebius being about to furnish another edition of the work, and thinking that a translation of certain documents relating to that celebrated convention, throwing light on its transactions, would be interesting to the readers of Eusebius, and add some value to the new edition, the writer of the following pages, was induced, at his request, to undertake the performance of such a version. But in the prosecution of his task, he perceived that the documents would be better understood, and consequently be more acceptable to the reader, if preceded by a short and connected view of the origin of the Arian controversy, and of the proceedings of the synod; derived from such original and authentic sources of information as were within his power. He has therefore introduced the documents by such a summary of events. In preparing it, it is very possible he may have inadvertently fallen into some mistakes; but not, he trusts, into any error of importance. He is conscious, at least, of no wilful misrep-

resentation of facts, nor of any intentional departure from the truth of history.

In some instances, the writer has given the descriptions of the authors, from whom he has derived his materials, with more minuteness of detail than may seem consistent with the narrow limits to which he has been restricted. But he thought that these particulars might be useful as presenting a picture of the manners and character of the times to which they relate. He has also given at length some narratives which have no immediate reference to his main design, because he considered them as interesting or instructive.

In the translations annexed, he has sought to give a faithful version of the originals; without, however, obscuring the meaning by aiming at too great a degree of mere verbal exactness. In other words, he has endeavored not to sacrifice the sense and spirit of his authors, by too strict an adherence to the letter. How far he has succeeded in this attempt, is respectfully submitted to the decision of those, who are best qualified to judge.

A HISTORICAL VIEW OF THE COUNCIL OF NICE.

CONTENTS.

Introductory remarks;—Origin of the Arian dispute;—Convocation at Nice;—The logicians rebuked;—Conversion of a heathen philosopher;—Preliminary meetings of the bishops;—Mutual accusations of the prelates, and Constantine's reproof;—Opening of the council;—The opinions of Arius examined and condemned;—Time of celebrating Easter determined;—Meletius;—Canons;—Dialogue between Acesius and the emperor;—Conclusion of the Synod;—Reflections.

It was the charge of our Saviour to his apostles, after his resurrection, to “go and teach all nations.” This command was, in a great measure, accomplished by them, and those who succeeded them in the ministry, within three centuries of the time when the gospel was first preached in Judea by its divine Author. In the prosecution of their glorious enterprise, a great proportion of the then known world, by the blessing of God on their indefatigable labors, submitted to the religion of Jesus. They visited the burning climes of Africa, and the various regions of Asia, to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation; and a great part of Europe, from the countries bordering on the Mediterranean to the distant shores of Britain, received the light of Christian truth. But, although their efforts were crowned with so considerable a share of success, they encountered in their progress almost continual opposition, and endured nearly every variety of hardship and persecution. Some of them were assailed by the bigotry and malice of the Jews, and others became victims to the rage and cruelty of their gentile oppressors.

They were exposed to the lawless violence of the multitude, and suffered from the sanguinary decrees of rulers and princes. If, under the milder sway of a few of the Roman emperors, they enjoyed an interval of comparative repose, it was only to be followed by a renewal of their calamities. At length, however, a brighter prospect was opened to the Christian world. In consequence of the victory of Constantine, over the tyrant Licinius, in the year of our Lord 323, external tranquillity was fully secured to the Church; and in order to confirm it, several beneficial laws were enacted by the emperor. He recalled those who had been banished for the profession of the faith; and the property of such as had been despoiled of their goods, was restored. He gave directions for enlarging the ancient churches, and building new and more splendid ones. He commanded that the clergy should be held in honor; and shielded their persons from indignity and outrage. The people were exhorted to relinquish idolatry, and embrace the true religion; and many other salutary measures were adopted, to extend the influence, and promote the welfare of Christianity.

But while Constantine was zealously employed in this laudable design, and the Church was protected from foreign enemies, a dissension had arisen in its own bosom, which occasioned much animosity, and long continued to disturb its domestic peace. It happened that Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria in Egypt, disputing one day, in the presence of his presbyters and other clergy, on the subject of the three divine persons, and being desirous of making a display of his knowledge, remarked, that in the Trinity there was a unity.* Arius, one of his presbyters, who was well versed in the art of reasoning and in metaphysical distinctions, thinking that the bishop was desirous of introducing the opinion of Sabellius † of Lybia, inclined to an error directly

* Socrates, L. I. c. 5.

† It will be recollect that Sabellius, who lived about the middle of the third century, believed in a *modal* Trinity, considering the Son and Holy Spirit as different manifestations only of the Godhead, and not as separate persons.

opposed to it, and replied, with great asperity, that if the Father begat the Son, the latter must have had a beginning; from which, he continued, it clearly followed that there was a time when he was not, and that his substance was made from nothing.* These novel and hitherto unheard of opinions excited many persons to enter into the controversy. By a little spark a great fire was thus kindled. The evil which originated in the church of Alexandria, pervaded the whole of Egypt, Lybia, and the upper Thebais, and reached at length to many other cities and provinces. Numbers favored the sentiments of Arius; but no one defended them with more warmth and earnestness than Eusebius, formerly bishop of Berytus, but who had now surreptitiously obtained possession of the bishopric of Nicomedia, in Bithynia. Alexander, being greatly incensed at these proceedings, assembled a numerous council, in which Arius and his followers were deposed; and afterwards wrote to the other bishops informing them of the fact.† His letter, copies of which were sent to all the cities under his spiritual jurisdiction, served only to increase the mischief, by kindling the flames of discord among those who received it. Some signified their approbation of the letter, while others expressed their dissent. Eusebius, of Nicomedia, opposed it more strenuously than others, as it made unfavorable mention of himself. The credit of Eusebius, at that period, was great, because the emperor then made Nicome-

* Sozomen gives the following account of this dispute. "Arius having declared his opinions in public, some of those who heard of them, blamed Alexander for having suffered him to advance such novel doctrines, but this prelate thought proper to leave the two parties at liberty to dispute upon an obscure subject, lest if he should prohibit the controversy, he might seem to terminate it by force, rather than by persuasion. Sitting, therefore, in the midst of his clergy, he permitted every one to say what he thought proper. Alexander inclined sometimes to one side, and sometimes to the other, but declared at last for those who maintained that the Son of God is consubstantial and coeternal with the Father, and required Arius to hold the same opinion; and because he refused to do it, drove him from the Church, together with the priests and deacons who supported him." Hist. Eccles. L. I. c. 15.

† Documents, A.

dia his residence, having built a palace in that city a short time before the reign of Diocletian. Many of the bishops, therefore, were subservient to the wishes of Eusebius. He was continually writing, sometimes to Alexander, to induce him to abandon the dispute with Arius, and receive him into communion, and sometimes to the bishops of the different cities, in order to persuade them not to join that prelate. The churches were thus filled with tumult and disorder. Nor was the war of words confined to the pastors of the church, but the people also were divided, inclining to one or the other of the two parties. The matter proceeded, at length, to such a shameful extremity, that the Christian religion was publicly ridiculed, and afforded a subject of profane merriment to the pagans, even in their theatrical exhibitions. The people of Alexandria contended with childish petulance respecting the most sublime mysteries of our faith. Each party sent messengers to the bishops of every province, and succeeded in gaining individuals to their respective opinions. But the Meletians, who had recently been separated from the Church, espoused the cause of the Arians. They were so denominatored from Meletius, one of the bishops of Egypt, who had been deposed by Peter of Alexandria, for several reasons, but especially for having offered sacrifice, in time of persecution, to the heathen divinities. His partizans were numerous ; and, although he had no sufficient cause for deserting the church, he complained that he had been treated with injustice by Peter, whom he attacked with reproaches and calumny. After the death of that prelate, who suffered martyrdom under Diocletian, he transferred his abuse to Achillas, who was next to Peter in the episcopate, and then to Alexander, his successor. In this state of things, the controversy respecting our Lord's divinity taking place, Meletius, with his followers, favored the party of Arius, and supported him against the bishop. They who thought that the notions of Arius were absurd, approved of the sentence against him ; and considered those who agreed with him in opinion as justly condemned. Eu-

sebius of Nicomedia, however, and such as had embraced the views of Arius, wrote to Alexander, praying that the excommunication might be removed, on the ground that his opinions were orthodox.

On receiving intelligence of these transactions, the emperor was greatly afflicted ; and, regarding the affair as his own private calamity, spared no pains to suppress the growing evil. Accordingly he sent a letter* to Alexander and Arius, exhorting them to be reconciled, by Hosius, bishop of Corduba, a city of Spain, who was a man of approved fidelity, and greatly beloved by the emperor. He had reached the age of seventy, had been a bishop thirty years, was a confessor in the persecution of Maximian, and celebrated throughout the Church. This letter, however well intended, produced but little effect. The disorder indeed, had acquired such a degree of virulence, that neither the endeavors of the emperor, nor the influence and authority of his messenger, were of any avail. Both Alexander and Arius remained inflexible, the people disputed with still greater acrimony, and tumults became more frequent.

But there was another subject which occasioned considerable uneasiness in the Church, viz. the difference which arose among the orientals with respect to the proper day of keeping Easter, some celebrating that festival in the manner of the Jews, and others following the custom of Christians throughout the rest of the world. This diversity of practice, however, with regard to the day of observing that important solemnity, did not hinder religious fellowship, although it might cast a shade of gloom over the joyful anniversary of our Saviour's resurrection. The emperor, therefore, finding that the quiet of the Church was not a little disturbed by these two evils, assembled (by the advice of some of the prelates, according to Rufinus,) a general council, inviting, by letter, all the bishops to meet at Nice, in Bithynia, and furnishing them with the means of conveyance. In consequence, a great number of them, not less than three

* Documents, B.

hundred and eighteen,* arrived from various cities and territories, attended by a vast concourse of the inferior clergy. Daily and ample provision was made by Constantine for the support and accommodation of this numerous body. It is mentioned by Sozomen, that several persons were also present, well instructed in the dialectic art, for the purpose of assisting the bishops.

So great a synod was without previous example; for the Church was not at liberty to convoke such numerous assemblies under the pagan emperors. The pastors of three churches founded by the apostles, were present, Macarius, bishop of Jerusalem, Eustathius, of Antioch, and Alexander, of Alexandria. Of this memorable council, Eusebius Pamphilus speaks in the following terms.† “The most distinguished ministers of God met together from every part of Europe, Asia, and Africa. The sacred edifice, as if enlarged by the pleasure of God, inclosed at the same time within its walls, both Syrians and Cilicians, Phenicians, Arabians, and inhabitants of Palestine; Egyptians, Thebeans, and Lybians, with others arriving from Mesopotamia. A bishop from Persia was also present. Nor was the Seythian absent from this assembly. Pontus, also, and Galatia, Pamphylia and Cappadocia, Asia and Phrygia furnished representatives from their most able divines. Thracians too, Macedonians, Achaians and Epirotes, and those who resided at a vast distance beyond them, were convened. That illustrious Span-

* The early historians of the church differ considerably as to the number of bishops assembled on this occasion. Athanasius mentions about three hundred; and in one passage of his works expressly says that there were three hundred and eighteen. Eusebius speaks of more than two hundred and fifty. Eustathius, of Antioch, who was present, as well as the two already named, and was an active member of the synod, declares that there were about two hundred and seventy, but that he cannot give the exact number, on account of the great multitude who attended; nor indeed does he profess to have been very solicitous to ascertain it. Sozomen reckons about three hundred and twenty. The number mentioned in the text was at length generally admitted as the correct one. See Cave, Hist. Eccles. Lit. p. 223.

† Vit. Const. L. III. c. 7.

iard, who is so highly spoken of, took his seat with the others. The prelate of the imperial city, indeed, was absent on account of his advanced years, but his place was supplied by presbyters. Constantine, alone, of all the princes who ever lived, wove so brilliant a crown as this, joined together by the bond of peace, as a suitable acknowledgment of gratitude to Heaven for the victories vouchsafed him over his enemies, and dedicated it to God his Saviour, in bringing together so great a convention ; an image, as it were, of the apostolic assembly. For it is related that in the times of the apostles, religious men were gathered together from every nation under heaven. Among them were Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia and Pamphylia, Egypt, and the parts of Lybia, which is near Cyrene ; strangers also of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians. In that congregation, however, there was this circumstance of inferiority, that all who were collected together were not ministers of God, while the present assembly included more than two hundred and fifty bishops ; but such a multitude of presbyters, deacons and acolothists accompanied them, that it was difficult to determine their number. Among these holy ministers, some excelled by the wisdom and eloquence of their discourse, others by the gravity of their deportment and patience of labor ; and others, again, by their humility, and the gentleness of their manners. Some of them were honored on account of their grey hairs, while others were recommended by their youthful vigor and activity, both of body and mind. Several of them had but recently begun to exercise the functions of their ministry."

This account of Eusebius may sufficiently refute the disparaging language of Sabinus,* bishop of Heraclea in Thrace, who derides the fathers of Nice as ordinary and ignorant men. It is very probable that in so large an assembly, collected from

* He was of the sect of Macedonius, who considered the Holy Ghost as a divine energy, and not a distinct person.

various quarters, such a character might be applicable to some individuals; but there is no reason to doubt that there was a fair proportion of men of talents, learning and piety, in this convocation. Some were confessedly eminent for knowledge and abilities; and several of them, according to Theodoret, had exercised miraculous powers, which, though less common, it is likely, in the third and fourth centuries, than in the preceding ages of the Church, were yet to be found, in the opinion of some respectable writers, within its communion. Others were esteemed on account of their past sufferings in the cause of our holy religion, still bearing in their bodies, like the great apostle of the Gentiles, "the marks of the Lord Jesus."

Before the opening of the council, some who were experienced in the practice of disputation, began to agitate questions of theology. A layman of good sense, who had the courage to confess the name of Christ, in a time of persecution, perceiving that many were attracted by the force and elegance of their discourses, undertook to rebuke them by remarking, that neither our Lord nor his apostles had taught us the rules of logic, or idle subtleties, but the truth, which is preserved by faith and good works. All who were present listened to him with admiration, and approved of what he had said. The speakers themselves became more moderate in consequence; and the noise and clamor excited by their animated declamation were no longer heard.

It is also related * that certain heathen philosophers were anxious to take a part in the dispute, some of them wishing to be made acquainted with the doctrines of the gospel, and others, to whom the Christians were obnoxious, on account of the decaying credit of their own religion, desiring to create a misunderstanding, and to foment divisions among them. One of these "seekers after wisdom," in the vain confidence of his imagined eloquence, assuming an insolent manner, endeavored to

* Sozomen, I. 8.

turn the priests into ridicule. But a plain and illiterate old man, one of those who had been distinguished as confessors, was unable to bear his arrogance ; and, although unversed in the rules of logic and the art of disputation, ventured to accost him. This excited the laughter of some inconsiderate persons, to whom he was known, but alarmed the more reflecting, who apprehended that he might expose himself in so unequal a contest. Their respect for his character, however, prevented any attempt to hinder him from speaking. " Listen," he said, " philosopher, in the name of Jesus. There is one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible, who has performed all this by the power of his Word, and established it by the holiness of his Spirit. The Word, which we call the Son of God, pitying the errors of men and their brutish way of life, condescended to be born of a woman, to sojourn among them, and to die for their salvation. He will come again, to judge the actions of every one in this life. We believe, in the simplicity of our hearts, that this is the truth. Do not then fruitlessly trouble yourself, in seeking arguments against these things, or in attempting to discover the mode in which they may be, or not. But if you believe, only tell me so." The philosopher, not a little astonished at this unexpected address, answered, I believe ; and, thanking the old man for having vanquished him, recommended it to those with whom he had formerly agreed in sentiment, to follow his example, solemnly declaring, that the change which he had experienced was the effect of divine power, and that he felt himself inexplicably impelled to embrace the faith of Christ.

The bishops had several conferences among themselves previously to the day when they were to proceed to the formal decision of affairs, and on which, Constantine desired to be present. Arius having been sent for on these occasions, declared his opinions as they are given in his letters ; *—that God has not always been a Father, and that there was a time when the Son

* One of them may be found among the Documents annexed, C.

was not ; that the Son is a creature like the others ; that he is mutable by his nature ; that by his free will he chose to remain virtuous, but that he might change like others. He said that Jesus Christ was not true God, but divine by participation, like all others to whom the name of God is attributed. He added, that he was not the substantial Word of the Father, and his proper wisdom, by which he had made all things, but that he was himself made by the eternal wisdom ; that he is foreign in every thing from the substance of the Father ; that we were not made for him, but he for us, when it was the pleasure of God, who was before alone, to create us ; that he was made by the will of God, as others are, having no previous existence at all, since he is not a proper and natural production of the Father, but an effect of his grace. The Father, he continued, is invisible to the Son, and the Son cannot know him perfectly ; nor, indeed, can he know his own substance. Some expressions of Arius are deemed too irreverent to be repeated, but the curious reader may find them in the works of Athanasius.* The bishops, assembled as they were from so many different and widely separated countries, stopped their ears on hearing such language, and rejected this doctrine as remote and alien from that of the Church. After a protracted discussion, some were of opinion that nothing new should be introduced, and that they should hold to the faith which was received from the beginning by tradition. This was particularly the case with those whose simplicity of character led them to receive religious truths without a minute examination. Others contended that it was not expedient to follow the opinions of the ancients without inquiry. Many of the bishops, and of the ecclesiastics, who attended them, acquired great reputation at these preliminary meetings, by exhibiting their strength in the art of logic, and their practised skill in disputes of this nature, and thus made themselves known, not only to the emperor, but also to his courtiers ; and from that time Athanasius, a deacon of the church of Alexan-

* Orat. I. contra Arianos, p. 294 and 295.

dria, who accompanied his bishop, took the principal part in this important discussion.

Constantine being desirous of meeting so great a number of prelates as were assembled at Nice, as well as of promoting peace and unanimity, repaired to that city, after he was informed of their arrival. But, as it too frequently happens, many of that sacred order, as if they had met together on their private concerns, and supposing that they had found a favorable opportunity of having their grievances redressed, presented to the emperor written complaints against their brethren. As he was almost continually importuned with memorials of this kind, he deferred the consideration of them all to a certain day. At the appointed time, he addressed the prelates to the following effect. "All these accusations, my friends, must be finally determined at the great day of account, by the common Judge of all men. But it does not belong to a man like myself to take cognizance of these mutual charges, as they are brought by bishops, who ought so to demean themselves as not to be judged by others. Imitate, then, the divine clemency in forgiving one another; and relinquishing your reciprocal imputations, agree to be at peace: And let us give our attention to those articles of faith, for the consideration of which, we have convened in this place." He assured them, according to Theodoret,* although this seems to have been said at another time, that he had never read their libels. He declared that the delinquencies of the prelates ought not to be published, lest they should prove an occasion of offence to the people; and even added, that if he should surprise a bishop in adultery, he would cover him with his imperial mantle, for fear that the example of the crime should be prejudicial to those who might witness it. He then commanded them to desist from their unseemly recriminations, and ordered their memorials to be thrown into the fire.

The day appointed by the emperor for the public session of the council was under the consulate of Paulinus and Julian,

*Hist. Eccles. I. 11.

the thirteenth of the calends of July, answering to the nineteenth of June,* A. D. 325. On the arrival of that day, says Eusebius,† all those who were to be present at the council, assembled in an apartment in the centre of the palace which was larger than any of the others. Many benches were disposed on each side, and every one took his proper place. When all were seated with suitable decorum, they awaited the coming of the emperor. First one, then another, and then a third, of his attendants entered the hall. Others also preceded, not armed men, nor any of his usual guard, but only his particular friends. At the signal which announced the entrance of the emperor, all arose, and he appeared in the midst of them, his purple robe, resplendent with gold and precious stones, dazzling the eyes of the beholders. That his mind was impressed with religious awe was evident in his downcast eyes, his blushing countenance, and his modest step and movement. He was taller than any of those, by whom he was surrounded. Nor was he in stature only, but also in elegance of form, and robustness of frame, superior to the others. These external advantages were heightened by courteousness of behavior, and a princely condescension, indicative, says his biographer, of the noble qualities of his mind. When he had reached the upper end of the hall, he remained standing in the middle, between the highest places, before a small chair, burnished with gold, which was prepared for his accommodation, until he was requested to be seated by the bishops, who then resumed their places.

The prelate ‡ who occupied the seat on the right side of the emperor then addressed him in a short speech, giving thanks and praise to Almighty God for the benefits conferred on the

* Socrates says, that it was on the 20th of May, but Valesius thinks he was mistaken. Atticus, bishop of Constantinople, mentions the 14th of June, but the date assumed by the writer is supported by the council of Calcedon and the Alexandrian Chronicle. The reader who may wish to see a full examination of this difficulty, is referred to Tillemont, *mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclesiastique*, Tom. VI. Note I, sur le Concile de Nicée.

† Vit. Cons. III. 7.

‡ Eustathius, according to Theodoret. I. 7.

Church through his instrumentality. When he was seated, the spectators all continued in silence, fixing their eyes upon the emperor, who, surveying them with a cheerful and serene expression of countenance, and employing a few moments to collect his thoughts, spake to the following purport, in a pleasant and subdued tone of voice. "It was, my dear friends, my most cherished wish, that I might one day enjoy the sight of this convention. Having been indulged in this desire, I return thanks to God, the ruler of all, who, in addition to innumerable other favors, has granted me this greatest of all blessings, to see you assembled together, and united in your minds. May no malignant foe disturb in future our public happiness. After the complete subversion, by the help of God our preserver, of the tyranny of those, who warred against the Most High, let no malevolent demon again expose the divine law, in any other manner, to slander and detraction. An internal sedition in the Church is, in my apprehension, more dangerous and formidable than any war, in which I can be engaged; nor do foreign concerns, however unfortunate, affect my mind with so sensible a grief as this unhappy affair. After I had become victorious, by divine assistance, over all my enemies, I thought that it only remained for me to render thanks to God, and to participate in the universal joy with those, whose liberation he has accomplished through my agency and efforts. But when the unwelcome news of your dissensions was brought to my ears, I conceived that the report should by no means be neglected; and hoping that, by my interference, a remedy might be applied to the evil, I sent for you all, without delay. Great indeed is my satisfaction to see you assembled together. But I shall consider the object of my prayers and labors as fully obtained, when I shall behold you united in the purpose of promoting harmony and concord; which, as persons consecrated to God, it is your duty to preach, and to inculcate on others. Endeavor then, my friends, ministers of God, and faithful servants of a common master and Saviour, that the causes of your disagreement being removed,

all the asperities of controversy may be smoothed by the dictates of peace. By pursuing this course, you will not only do that, which is pleasing to God, who is exalted above all, but will confer an important benefit on myself, your fellow servant." The emperor also remarked,* that the power of the enemy being destroyed, and no one remaining to make any resistance, it would be deplorable indeed, if they should now molest one another, and give occasion to those, who regarded them with no friendly aspect, to turn their quarrels into ridicule. Their business, he said, was with matters of theology, the decision of which depended on the instructions which the Holy Spirit had left them. The gospel, the letters of the apostles, and the works of the ancient prophets, teach us, with sufficient clearness, what we are obliged to believe concerning the divine nature. Let us then renounce all angry contentions, and seek in the books which the Holy Ghost has dictated, the solution of our doubts.

The oration of Constantine was pronounced in Latin, which was his vernacular tongue. Another person translated it into Greek, which was better understood by most of the fathers, as it was generally diffused in all parts of the East. The emperor then gave those who presided in the council an opportunity of speaking, and permitted the members to examine matters of doctrine and religious differences.

The opinions of Arius were first examined in the presence of the emperor. He repeated what he had said on former occasions. The Eusebians, anxious to defend him, entered into the dispute. The other bishops, who were beyond comparison the greater number, mildly required them to give an account of their doctrine, and to support it by suitable proofs. But no sooner had they begun to speak, than they seemed to be at variance with themselves; they remained confounded, and seeing the absurdity of their heresy, confessed their shame by their silence.† The bishops having refuted their allegations,

*Theodoret, I. 7.

†Athan. de decretis, p. 251.

explained the holy doctrine of the Church. The emperor patiently listened to these disputes, which were agitated at first with considerable warmth. He gave great attention, says Eusebius, to what was advanced on either side; and sometimes reproofing, sometimes encouraging the speakers, he moderated by degrees the violence of the contending parties. He spake kindly to every one in the Greek language, with which he was not unacquainted, gaining over some of them to his opinion by the strength of his arguments, and softening others by his entreaties. He commended those who spake judiciously, persuaded them all to concord, and reduced them at last to an agreement on the contested points.*

A letter of Eusebius of Nicomedia was read in the council, which evidently contained the heretical opinion, and discovered the management of the party. It excited so much indignation that it was rent in pieces, and Eusebius was overwhelmed with confusion.† He says, among other things, that if the Son of God was acknowledged to be uncreated, it would be necessary to admit, that he was consubstantial with the Father.‡ It has been thought that this was the letter to Paulinus of Tyre, in which the same idea is expressed in other words.§ The Arians also presented to the council a confession of faith, which was torn on being read, and pronounced to be spurious and false. A great outcry was raised against them, and they were generally accused of having betrayed the truth.|| The council wishing to set aside the terms employed by the Arians, and to use words au-

*Eus. III. 13.

†Eustath. as quoted by Theodoret. I. 8.

‡ According to Ambrose, occasion was taken from this expression of Eusebius, which discovered so great a dread of the word consubstantial, to adopt that formidable term against the Arians. “Hoc verbum posuerunt patres, quod viderunt adversariis esse formidini; ut tanquam evaginato ab ipsis gladio, ipsum nefandæ caput herœeos amputarent.” de fide L. III. c. 7.

§ Documents, D.

|| Theodoret, I. 7.

thorized by scripture, said that our Lord was by nature the only Son of God, the alone Word, power and wisdom of the Father, true God, according to St. John ; the splendor of the glory, and the image of the substance of the Father, as St. Paul writes. The partisans of Eusebius said among themselves,* let us consent to this, for we also are of God, since it is written, “there is one God, from whom all things proceed.” And in another place, “old things have passed away, and all things are new, but all things are of God.” The bishops, however, who comprehended their design, explained more clearly the words “of God,” by saying that the Son was of the substance of God. It is true, they remarked, that creatures are said to be from God, because they exist not of themselves, nor without a cause ; but the Son alone is properly of the substance of the Father. For this is peculiar to the only begotten and true Word of the Father, and therefore the expression “of the substance of the Father” has been employed.

The prelates having again asked the Arians, who seemed to be few in number, if they allowed that the Son was not a creature, but the alone power, wisdom and image of the Father, and in no respect whatever different from him, and that he is true God, it was observed, that Eusebius and his adherents made signs to one another that all these particulars might agree to men, for we too, said they, are called the image and glory of God. There are many powers, for it is written, “all the powers of God went out of Egypt.” The caterpillars and locusts too are called the great power. “The God of powers is with us, the God of Jacob, our protector.” We are not merely the children of God, since the Son of God himself calls us his brethren. And as to their denominating the Son true God, that occasions us, they said, no embarrassment, for he is so truly, because he has been made so. But the bishops perceiving their sophistry and dissimulation, produced a collection of passages

* Athan. de decret. p. 367, et epist. ad Africanos, as reported by Theodoret. I. 8.

from the sacred writings, where the Son is called splendor, fountain, river, and figure of the substance; and quoted the words "in thy light shall we see light," and "I and my Father are one." Finally, they explained themselves with more clearness and brevity, in declaring that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, making use of the Greek word *ομοονοσις*, which this dispute has since rendered so celebrated, as expressive of the meaning of the terms and passages which have been cited. It was understood to signify that the Son is not only like the Father, but so similar that he may be called with propriety the same; and implies that the resemblance and immutability of the Son is different from that which is affirmed of us, and which we acquire by the practice of virtue, and the observation of the divine commands. Besides, bodies which have a resemblance only, may be separate and distant; as a father and a son, however great may be the likeness between them. But the Son of God was considered not only similar to the substance of the Father, but inseparable from it,—the Word being always in the Father, and the Father in the Word.

The Arians rejected with murmurings and contempt the term consubstantial, complaining that it was not to be found in the Scriptures, and might be taken in a very exceptionable sense. For, they remarked, that which is of the same substance with another is derived from it in one of these three modes; by production, as a plant from its root; by fluxion, as children from their fathers; or by division, as in abstracting three or four pieces from a mass, for instance, of gold.* The Catholics explained so happily the term consubstantial, that the emperor himself, little as we may suppose him to have been familiar, from his education and military habits of life, with theological inquiries, perceived that it did not include any corporeal idea, no division being signified of the substance of the Father, which is altogether immaterial and divine, and must therefore be understood only in a divine and ineffable manner. They demonstrated the

* Basil, Epist. 300.

injustice of their opponents, in objecting to this word, on the pretence that it is not to be found in Scripture, when they themselves scrupled not to employ expressions, which are not in the sacred writings, such as, that the Son of God was made from nothing, and had not always existed. They added, that the term consubstantial was not a new one, and that it had been used by illustrious bishops of Rome and Alexandria in opposing those who represented that the Son was a work, or creation. Eusebius of Cesarea himself acknowledges this.* It was insisted by some, that the word consubstantial had been objected to, as improper, in the council of Antioch, which was held against Paul of Samosata. But this, it was asserted, was because it had been taken in a gross manner, as implying division, as when it is said that several pieces of money are of the same metal. But the only question in reference to Paul, was to show that the Son was before all things, and that, being the Word, he was made flesh; whereas the Arians admit that he was before all time, maintaining, however, that he was made, and that he was one of the creatures. They declared that his resemblance to, and union with, the Father, was not with regard to his substance or nature, but in a conformity of will and counsel.†

After the word consubstantial, and others the best adapted to express the catholic faith, were agreed on, Hosius, according to Athanasius, drew up the form, as recorded in the letter of Eusebius. All the bishops approved of this symbol and subscribed it, with the exception of a small number of Arians.‡ At first, there were seventeen who refused to subscribe, but the number was afterwards reduced to five, viz. Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theognis of Nice, Maris of Calcedon, Theonas and Secundus of Lybia. Eusebius of Cesarea agreed to the word consubstantial,

* Documents, E.

† By comparing the above sketch of the debate on this subject, derived from Athanasius and others, with the account of it given in the letter of Eusebius of Cesarea, (Doc. E.) which is somewhat different, if not in certain particulars contradictory, the intelligent reader may be the better enabled to elicit the truth.

‡ Socrates, I.8.

after having opposed it the preceding day. Three of the five who have been named conceded the point at last, from the fear of deposition. Theonas and Secundus only, continued obstinately attached to Arius, and the Synod anathematized them with him.* The writings of Arius were condemned at the same time with himself, and particularly his Thalia.†

The question relating to the observance of Easter, which was agitated in the time of Anicetus and Polycarp, and afterwards in that of Victor, was still undecided. It was one of the principal reasons for convoking the council of Nice, being the most important subject to be considered after the Arian controversy. It appears that the churches of Syria and Mesopotamia continued to follow the custom of the Jews, and celebrated Easter on the fourteenth day of the moon, whether falling on Sunday or not. All the other churches observed that solemnity on Sunday only, viz. those of Rome, Italy, Africa, Lybia, Egypt, Spain, Gaul and Britain; and all Greece, Asia, and Pontus. It was considered indecorous, and as affording occasion of scandal to unbelievers, that while some were engaged in fasting and penitence, others should be indulging in festivity and relaxation.

This subject having been discussed, it was decreed to celebrate Easter on the same day, and the oriental prelates promis-

* Philostorgius, an Arian historian, of whose work an epitome is extant by Photius, acknowledges that all the bishops agreed to the Nicene Creed, with the exception of Secundus and Theonas. But the Arian prelates who embraced the decision of the council, artfully concealed under the word *ομοονικος* the term *ομοιονικος*, the former signifying *of the same substance*, and differing in orthography only by a letter from the latter, which means *like*, or *similar*. The course they adopted (in assenting to the decrees of the council,) was by the suggestion of Constantia, sister of the emperor. Phil. L. I. 8.

† It was a chant set to the same measure and music as the infamous songs formerly composed for convivial occasions by Sotades, a Greek poet, proverbial for his flagrant immoralities. This was sufficient to render it odious, to say nothing of the erroneous opinions which it contained, for Arius had incorporated into it the substance of his doctrines. He composed several other airs, to insinuate his opinions more agreeably into vulgar and uncultivated minds. Some of them were intended for travellers, sailors, and millers. See Phil. L. I. 2.

ed to conform to the practice of Rome, of Egypt, and of all the West. St. Athanasius remarks a difference of language, in pronouncing on this subject, from that which was used in reference to the faith. With respect to the latter it is said, "this is the catholic faith, we believe," &c., in order to show that it was no new determination, but an apostolic tradition. Accordingly, no date is given to this decision, neither the day nor the year being mentioned. But with regard to Easter, it is said, "we have resolved as follows," in order to show that all were expected to obey.* Easter day was fixed on the Sunday immediately following the new moon which was nearest after the vernal equinox, because it is certain that our Saviour rose from the dead on the Sunday which next succeeded the passover of the Jews. In order to find more readily the first day of the moon, and consequently the fourteenth, the council ordained that the cycle of nineteen years should be made use of, because at the end of this period, the new moons return very nearly to the same days of the solar year. This cycle, which is denominated, in Greek, *Εννεακαιδεκατητικός*, had been discovered about seven hundred and fifty years before, by Meto, a mathematician of Athens, and it has since been termed the golden number, because it was customary to mark in the calendar, with letters of gold, the days of the new moon. It has been thought that the synod assigned the task of this calculation to Eusebius of Cesarea. It is certain, however, that he had composed a paschal canon of nineteen years, and that he had explained the nature and origin of this question in a treatise dedicated to the emperor Constantine, who gave him thanks for it in a letter. But notwithstanding the decision of the council there were some quartodecimans, as they were termed, who remained pertinaciously attached to the celebration of Easter on the fourteenth of the moon, and among others the Audeans, schismatics of Mesopotamia. They found fault with the council, reproachfully remarking, that this was

*Synod. Arim. et Seleuc. Epist. p. 873.

the first time that the ancient tradition, through complaisance for Constantine, had been departed from.

The Synod was also desirous of applying a remedy to the schism of the Meletians, who had occasioned a division in Egypt for twenty-four years, and who encouraged the Arians by their union with the party. Meletius was treated with considerable lenity—more, it was thought, than he deserved. He was permitted to continue in Lycopolis, the city of his residence, but was deprived of his ecclesiastical powers and authority, being merely permitted to retain the title of bishop. But the reader is referred to the synodical epistle* for the particulars in relation to Meletius, and those who had received ordination at his hands.

Another part of the business of the council was the framing of several canons, or general laws of discipline, not, it is understood, to establish a new code of regulations, but chiefly to preserve the ancient rules of conduct imposed on the clergy, which had been too much relaxed or neglected. These canons† are twenty in number, ‡ and have been acknowledged as genuine by all antiquity. The bishops were inclined to pass an ecclesiastical law in addition to the others, requiring, according to Socrates, that those who had been admitted to holy orders, the bishops, priests and deacons, and, according to Sozomen, the subdeacons also, should abstain from cohabitation with the wives whom they had married while they were laymen. When this topic was proposed for debate, and the opinions of the synod were called for, Paphnutius, rising from his seat in the midst of the bishops, and raising his voice, protested against the imposition of so heavy a yoke on the clergy, remarking, in the words of St. Paul, that marriage was honorable and the nuptial bed undefiled, and that such an excess of rigor might rather be injurious than beneficial to the Church; that every one was not capable of so entire a continence, and that the repudiated wives

* F. † Documents, I.

‡ Some of the Eastern Christians mention a much greater number. See J. S. Asseman. Bibliothe. Orient. Clement. Vatic. tom. I. p. 22, 195. and Cave, Hist. Lit. p. 224.

might forfeit, perhaps, their conjugal virtue. He added, that he considered the marriage union, sanctioned by the laws, as pure and chaste; that it was sufficient, according to ancient usage, that he, who had once been admitted to the clerical order, should no longer be permitted to marry; but that it was unnecessary to separate him from the wife whom he had espoused when in the condition of a layman. It was thus that the venerable confessor supported his sentiments, although he had not only never been married himself, but had always refrained from illicit intercourse with the other sex, having been educated from childhood in a monastery, in which he was distinguished for his singular purity of life. The council acceded unanimously to the views of Paphnutius, and, without further deliberation, left those who were already married to continue in the state of wedlock or not, at their own discretion.

It will be perceived that the eighth canon of the synod relates to the sect of Novatians, who were called *Cathari*, that is, the pure. The last words of this canon are remarkable, and contain an important rule, that there should never be two bishops in the same city. The emperor, moved by his zeal for peace and union in the Church, had invited to the council a Novatian bishop by the name of Acesius. A conversation of some interest between Constantine and this prelate is recorded both by Socrates and Sozomen, which may be as well related, perhaps, in this place as in any other. When the form of faith was written, and the synod had subscribed it, the emperor asked Acesius, if he also agreed to that confession of faith, and approved of the resolution concerning Easter. "My prince," he replied, "I know of nothing new determined by the council. I have always understood, that from the beginning, from the very days of the apostles, the same definition of the faith, and the same time of celebrating the festival of Easter, has been handed down to us by tradition." "Why then," rejoined the emperor, "do you separate yourself from our communion?" Acesius explained to him what had happened under the persecution of

Decius, when many fell from the profession of the faith ; and spake of the rigor of the canon, which forbade receiving those, to the participation of the sacred mysteries, who, after baptism, had committed any such sin as is pronounced in scripture to be a sin unto death. "They ought, indeed," he said, "to be urged to repentance, but not encouraged to hope for pardon through the ministration of the priests. For this they should look directly to God, who alone has the power and prerogative of remitting sins." The bishop having thus spoken, the emperor replied, "Take a ladder, Acesius, and ascend alone to heaven."

Before separating, the council prepared a synodical epistle,* chiefly intended for the church of Alexandria, as being most interested in all the acts of the Synod. It is also addressed to all the faithful of Egypt, Pentapolis, Lybia, and all other churches whatever. The emperor Constantine wrote at the same time two letters, in order to promulgate the ordinances of the council, and to make them known to those, who were not present at the convention. The first † is directed to the churches in general, and informs them that the faith has been examined, and placed in so clear a light that no difficulty remains. Copies of this letter were dispatched to all the provinces. The second ‡ is particularly addressed to the church of Alexandria. He published also another letter, or more properly an edict, directed to the bishops and people, condemning Arius and his writings. He says that Porphyry, having composed impious books against Christianity, rendered himself infamous in the eyes of posterity, and that his writings were destroyed. It has in like manner, he continues, been decreed, that Arius and his followers be called Porphyrians, so that they may bear the name of him whom they have imitated ; and that if any book written by Arius shall be found, it shall be committed to the flames, that no monument of his corrupt doctrine may descend to future ages. He declares that whoever shall be convicted of having concealed

* F.

† Documents, G.

‡ Documents, H.

any book composed by Arius, instead of burning it, shall suffer death immediately after his apprehension. With whatever degree of aversion we may contemplate the doctrines of Arius, it is painful to witness so melancholy a forgetfulness in the first Christian emperor, of the benignant temper of Him, who rebuked the unhallowed zeal of the disciples, as not knowing what spirit they were of, who would have called down fire from heaven to consume the inhospitable Samaritans. At the same time, Arius and the two prelates who adhered the most obstinately to his party, Secundus and Theonas, were banished by the emperor.

The council concluded its session on the twenty-fifth day of August, A. D. 325, a month after the commencement of the twentieth year of the reign of Constantine, who ascended the throne on the twenty-fifth of July, A. D. 306; but it is thought that the festival on that occasion, which was celebrated in every part of the empire with great solemnity, was deferred in compliment to the termination of the synod. During the public rejoicings, Eusebius of Cesarea, in the presence of Constantine, and surrounded by the bishops, pronounced a panegyric on the emperor. A magnificent entertainment was provided by that prince, "for the ministers of God," to borrow the graphic language of Eusebius, "now reconciled with one another, as an acceptable sacrifice offered to the Divine Being, through them. No one of the bishops was absent from the imperial banquet, which was more admirably conducted than can possibly be described. The guards and soldiers, disposed in a circle, were stationed at the entrance of the palace with drawn swords. The men of God passed through the midst of them without fear, and went into the most private apartments of the royal edifice. Some of them were then admitted to the table of the emperor, and others took the places assigned them on either side. It was a lively image of the kingdom of Christ, and appeared more like a dream than a reality." At the conclusion of this splendid festival, the emperor courteously saluted every

individual of the company, and presented his guests with rich and valuable gifts, according to their respective rank and merits. When they were about to separate, he took a friendly leave of them, exhorting them to union, harmony and mutual condescension ; and concluded by recommending himself to their prayers. Thus ended the great Council of Nice, which, it is said, is still celebrated by the Greeks and Orientals among the festivals of the saints.

Nothing, in the preceding narrative, appears to give any countenance to that supremacy of the bishop of Rome, which was claimed and conceded in later ages. He was merely represented in his absence by two presbyters. He seems to have possessed no pre-eminence, nor any exclusive privileges. Bossuet indeed asserts, on the authority of Gelasius Cyzicenus, a writer in the latter part of the fifth century, that Hosius was one of the legates of the Roman prelate, and presided in the council ; but it is generally admitted that the testimony of Gelasius is of little value when unsupported by other writers ; and no earlier historian makes any mention of a fact, which, if true, would scarcely have been left unrecorded.

The remarkable unanimity of the synod on the subject of our Saviour's true and proper divinity, the only one examined by that convention, which excites much interest at the present day, may be considered, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, as affording a powerful confirmation of the truth of this important doctrine. Every part of the Christian world was virtually represented by men, who, from their commanding station and favorable opportunities, must be supposed to have been well acquainted with what was understood to have been the doctrine of the apostles, on this important article of our faith. Most of them, probably, lived within two centuries of the death of St. John. Could the original doctrine have been lost in a period so comparatively short ? Could it have been corrupted ? Could it have been generally corrupted throughout the Church ? If not, the fathers of Nice must have held, in this respect, the

faith delivered by the first preachers of Christianity, and consequently the true one. They could not have been ignorant of what was, and had been, believed, in their respective countries. The agreement, therefore, on this point, of so many different nations, as expressed by their representatives, nations of such various characters, pursuits, manners, customs and prejudices, can be satisfactorily accounted for only on the supposition, that they had received their belief from a common source, and preserved it pure by tradition, during the few generations which had elapsed from the time when they first received the gospel from the apostles themselves, or from those who lived not long after the apostolic age. It may be said, that many of the members of the council might have been deterred from expressing their real belief, as some few of them undoubtedly were, from the fear of exile or deposition. But they appear to have been almost unanimous on this subject before any threats of that kind were held out, and therefore such an apprehension could have operated on a very small number only ; and if even a mere majority had been Arians, the danger would obviously have been on the other side. St. Chrysostom remarks, that it would be absurd to charge the council, composed as it was, in a great measure, of saints and confessors, either with ignorance or fear. Nor does this reflection seem to be unfounded. For, how can it be reasonably supposed, that in the situation in which they were placed, and which has already been adverted to, they could be in any doubt whether our Lord was divine in the strict sense of the term, or a creature only, however exalted in rank and dignity ; or that such men would have disguised their genuine persuasion, from the fear of losing their sacerdotal honors, or of missing those temporal advantages and emoluments, which they might naturally have expected to enjoy under the dominion of a Christian prince ? Was it for them, men of unblemished integrity and virtue, basely to violate their consciences for "a piece of bread?" or descend, for the sake of office, from their elevated position, as "good soldiers of Jesus Christ," to the meanness of subter-

fuge and dissimulation? Was it for men who were born and grew up amidst scenes of pagan insult, cruelty and oppression, and many of whom, for their courageous defence of the truth, had been deprived of their substance, or loaded with chains, or confined in a dungeon, or maimed and disfigured in their persons; and who would doubtless have accompanied their heroic brethren in the faith, who "counted not their lives dear unto them," to the scaffold or the stake; or would have expired in torments on the rack, or been nailed to a cross, or become food for lions, rather than "blaspheme that worthy name whereby they were called;"—was it for *them* to stoop to such moral degradation? men, too, some of whom had been distinguished by the episcopal mitre at a period when it was so far from advancing their worldly interest, that it only exposed them more surely to the "loss of all things," added to their toils, their trials and their sufferings, and served but to render them a more conspicuous mark for heathen persecution?

It may be thought that the language and actions of the prelates were sometimes harsh and overbearing, and little adapted to encourage freedom of debate. It must be confessed, that, measured by the standard of modern usage in deliberative bodies, their deportment was occasionally vehement and impassioned. But, is no allowance to be made for ancient manners, and for the fervid and exaggerated style, both of speaking and acting, when under the influence of strong emotion, so prevalent in the eastern and southern regions, of which so considerable a proportion of the members of the synod were natives? It might be asked, however, from what cause so general an ebullition of indignant feeling proceeded. Was it not that their ears were wounded by language which they considered as blasphemous, and that sentiments were avowed which they regarded as alien from the belief of every part of the globe enlightened by the gospel, and contrary to the uniform and uninterrupted tradition every where received from the times of the apostles; a tradition to which, as well as to the scriptures, they solemnly appealed;

while, on the other hand, although the Arians alleged passages from the sacred writings in support of their opinion, they did not even pretend that it was sanctioned by the ancient and universal faith of the Christian Church ?

It will only be added, that the greater part of the protestant community believe that the doctrine of our Saviour's divinity is satisfactorily proved by the Scriptures alone, independently of any foreign aid, on a fair application to the sacred text of the legitimate rules of interpretation. But if, on a view of what has been advanced from the words of scripture for and against that doctrine, any doubt on that subject should remain, would not the historical evidence afforded by the result of the synod of Nice, (evidence which, in secular concerns, would be esteemed of great importance in determining a question of fact,) go far to remove it, without assuming, with the Church of Rome, the infallible authority of that venerable convocation, or believing, with Constantine, that its decision was guided by divine inspiration ?

The opinions of the “disputatious presbyter” of Alexandria, whose followers were soon divided into several sects, long continued to be the occasion of angry contentions and mutual persecutions, by no means becoming such as “profess and call themselves Christians.” The Arians flourished, at one period, in the sunshine of imperial favor, and were involved, at another, in disgrace and calamity. But their internal dissensions hastened their decline. The faith established at Nice prevailed at length, and “the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son,” says a modern historian,* “has been unanimously received as a fundamental article of the Christian faith, by the consent of the Greek, the Latin, the Oriental, and the Protestant Churches.”

* Gibbon, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. III. p. 334.

DOCUMENTS

RELATING TO THE PRECEDING NARRATIVE.

In the translation of the Letters, which are found in Socrates, with the exception of those of Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia, which are recorded by Theodore, the edition of Valesius, by Reading, Cambridge, 1720, has been used.

A.

Letter of Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria.

To our beloved, and most honored colleagues, in all places, in the ministry of the Catholic Church, Alexander, greeting in the Lord.

As the body of the Catholic Church is one, and as it is commanded in the divine scriptures that we should preserve the bond of peace and concord, it is proper that we should write and signify to one another, what happens to any one of us; so that if one member suffer or rejoice, the others may sympathize or rejoice with him. In our jurisdiction, then, there have lately appeared iniquitous men, and enemies of Christ, teaching an apostacy which might be justly thought and called a forerunner of Antiehrist. I had intended to bury this matter in silence, that the evil, being confined to the apostates themselves, might haply die away; and that it might not, by passing into other places, pollute the ears of some of the more simple. But since Eusebius, who is now of Nicomedia, imagining that the affairs of the Church depend upon his direction, (because, leaving the

Church of Berytus, he coveted and obtained, with impunity, that of Nicomedia,) has undertaken to protect these apostates, and to write letters in their favor to every quarter, that he may draw ignorant men into this worst of heresies, and most inimical to Christ; I thought it was necessary, knowing what is written in the law, that I should no longer forbear, but inform you all, that you may know who these apostates are, and the unfortunate language in which their error is expressed; and that in case Eusebius should have written to you, you may pay no regard to him. Willing now to renew through them his ancient malignity, which time seemed to have obliterated, he pretends that he writes letters for their sake. He shows, however, by his conduct, that he does this for the furtherance of his own interests. The names, then, of those who have become apostates are these: Arius, Achillas, Carpones, Aithales, another Arius, Sarmates, Euzoious, Lucius, Julianus, Menas, Helladius and Gaius; and with these, Secundus and Theonas, who were formerly denominated bishops. What they advance in opposition to scripture is this,—God was not always a Father, but there was a time when he was not a Father. The Word of God was not always, but originated from nothing; for God, who exists, created him, who was not, from that which did not exist. Therefore there was a time when he was not. For the Son is a creature, and was made. Nor is he like the Father with respect to his essence. Neither is he by nature the true Word of God, nor his true wisdom, but he is one of his works and creatures, and is improperly termed the word and wisdom, since he himself existed by the proper Word of God, and by the wisdom which is in God; by which, as he created all things, he made the Son. Therefore, by his nature, he is exposed to change and alteration, in like manner as other rational beings. The Word is foreign and separate from the substance of God, and the Father cannot be declared by the Son, and is invisible to him. Neither does the Son know the Father perfectly and accurately, neither can he see him perfectly. Nor does the Son know what the nature of

his own substance is. He was made on our account, that God might create us through him, as his instrument; nor would he ever have existed, unless God had determined to create us. And when they were asked whether the Word of God could be changed, as the devil is changed, they were not afraid to reply, Yes, he can, since he is mutable by his nature, being begotten and created. Such declarations having been made by Arius with unblushing effrontery, we, with the bishops in Egypt and Lybia, having met together, in number nearly a hundred, have excommunicated him and his followers. But Eusebius has received them, endeavoring to mix falsehood with truth, and ungodliness with piety. He will not, however, prevail. The truth is victorious. Light has no fellowship with darkness, nor has Christ any agreement with Belial. For, who ever heard such things? or who, now hearing them, is not struck with amazement, and does not stop his ears, that the pollution of such expressions may not penetrate into them? Who, when he hears John saying "in the beginning was the Word," will not condemn those who assert that there was a time when he was not? Or who, hearing in the gospel the words "only begotten Son," and "by him all things were made," will not abhor those, who affirm that he is one of the creatures? How indeed can he be one* of those "who were made by him? or how can he be the only begotten, who, according to their opinion, is to be included in the number of creatures? How can he be made from nothing, when the Father says, "My heart hath sent forth a good Word," and in another place, "I have begotten thee from the womb, before the morning," or how is he unlike the substance of the Father, who is the perfect image and splendor of the Father, and who says,—"He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." But if the Son be the reason and wisdom of the Father, how

* The expression in Socrates, is *ισος ειναι των δι αυτου γενομενων*, the equal of those things which were made by him. But the reading of the manuscript of Leo Allatius, *εις ειναι των δι αυτου γενομενων*, prefered by Valesius, is followed by the translator.

could there have been a time when he was not? For it is the same as if they should say, that God was once without his Word and wisdom. How can he be subject to change and variation, when he says, of himself, "I am in the Father, and the Father in me," and "I and my Father are one?" He declared also by the prophet, "Behold I am, and change not." And although it might be said that this declaration refers to the Father himself, it may in this instance be more properly understood of the Son, because when he became man he was not changed; but, as the Apostle says, "yesterday, and to-day, is the same, and forever." And what could have persuaded them to say that he was made on our account, when Paul says, "for whom, and by whom, are all things?" But as for their blasphemy, that the Father is not perfectly known by the Son, it is not to be wondered at. For, when once they had resolved to proclaim war against Christ, they despise even the words of our Lord himself, who says, "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father." If, therefore, the Father knows the Son in part only, it is evident that the Son also knows in part the Father. But if it be nefarious to say this, and if the Father perfectly knows the Son, it is clear, that in like manner as the Father knows his Word, the Son knows his Father, whose Word he is. By these remarks, and by explaining the sacred scriptures, we often gained the advantage over them. But, camelion-like, they again changed their ground, taking pains to bring upon themselves the application of what is written,—"When the ungodly man cometh into the depths of wickedness, he despiseth." Many heresies, indeed, have existed before their time, which have proceeded with licentious daring to great extravagance. But they, having endeavored in all their discourses to subvert the divinity of the Word, have justified, in a manner, these heresies, so far as it was in their power, by their own nearer approach to Anti-christ. For this reason they have been publicly expelled from the Church, and condemned by an anathema. We are grieved, indeed, at the ruin of these men; the more so, that having once

been instructed in the doctrine of the Church, they have now departed from it. We are not, however, greatly surprised. The same thing happened to Hymenæus and Philetus, and before them to Judas, who, having been a follower of the Saviour, afterwards betrayed and deserted him. And even with respect to these persons themselves, we were not without warning, for our Lord himself had said, "Beware lest any one deceive you ; for many will come in my name, saying, I am, and the time is at hand ; and shall lead many into error. Go not after them." And St. Paul, who had learnt these things from our Saviour, writes, that "in the last days, some shall depart from sound doctrine, giving heed to spirits of error, and to doctrines of demons, turning from the truth." Since, therefore, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ hath himself declared, and hath signified by the apostle, concerning such persons, we having heard their impiety with our own ears, have justly anathematized such men, as we have already said, and declared them to be aliens from the Catholic Church and faith. We have made this known to your piety, beloved and most respected fellow-laborers, that you may neither receive any of them, should they have the presumption to visit you, nor give any credit to what Eusebius or any other person may write respecting them. For we, who claim to be Christians, should turn away from all those who speak and think against Christ, as enemies of God, and corrupters of souls ; and not even salute such men, lest by any means we should become partakers of their sins, as is commanded by the blessed John. Salute the brethren who are with you. Those who are with us salute you.

B.

Extract of a letter from Constantine to Alexander and Arius.

The whole of this letter is given in Eusebius's life of Constantine, but that portion of it only which is found in Socrates is inserted here, the preceding part being considered less important in relation to the subject in debate.

The Conqueror Constantine, the greatest, august, to Alexander and Arius.

*** I understand this to have been the origin of the present controversy, that you, Alexander, required of your presbyters what they respectively thought of a certain passage of the law, or rather questioned them in regard to a point of useless debate ; and that you, Arius, advanced that which should either not have entered into your mind at first, or after having gained admission, should have been locked up in silence; and that dissensions arising among you in consequence, communion has been refused, and the most holy people, rent into two factions, have departed from the harmonious union of the common body. Therefore, let each of you, mutually pardoning the other, embrace what your fellow-servant most reasonably advises. But what is this? It was improper at first that questions should be asked on subjects of this kind, and then for the person interrogated to reply. Questions of this nature, which no law compels us to discuss, but which are suggested by a fondness for disputation in an hour of unprofitable leisure, may indeed be permitted as an exercise of the intellectual faculties. We ought however, to confine them within our own bosoms, not readily bringing them forward at public meetings, nor rashly confiding them to the ears of every one. For how eminently gifted must be the man, who can accurately understand the true nature of such great and difficult matters, or explain them in a manner worthy of their importance? But if any one should be supposed capable of performing this with ease, what portion of the common people would he be likely to convince? or who, in the

subtle management of such questions, could avoid the danger of falling into serious mistakes? In matters of this description, therefore, one should restrain a talkative disposition, lest, either through the weakness of his understanding, he should fail to explain what is proposed; or his hearers, being unable, from slowness of perception, to comprehend what is said, should necessarily fall into blasphemy or schism. Let, therefore, an unguarded question and an inconsiderate reply be set against each other, and mutually overlooked. This contention has not arisen respecting any important command of the law, nor has any new opinion been introduced with regard to the worship of God; but you both entertain the same sentiments, so that you may join in one communion. It is thought to be not only indecorous, but altogether unlawful, that so numerous a people of God should be governed and directed at your pleasure, while you are thus emulously contending with each other, and quarrelling about small and very trifling matters.* You know, if I may admonish your prudence by a little example, that even the philosophers themselves, although associated in one sect or profession, were frequently at variance on particular points. But although they differ, in consequence even of the excellence of their knowledge,† they again unite, on account of their fellowship, in the same general purpose. How much more reasonable is it, then,

* This passage is thus written in the manuscript of Leo Allatius. *τοσούτον του θεον λαον ὃν υπό τας υμετεραις ευχαις και φρεσιν ευθυνεισθαι προσηκει, διχονοειν ουτε πρεπον, &c.* Epiphanius Scolasticus, it appears, followed the same reading, as he thus translates the words. “Tantum Dei populum, quem vestris orationibus et prudentiâ convenit gubernari, discordare nec decet, nec omnino fas esse, credibile est.” It is believed to be unbecoming and utterly unlawful, that so numerous a people of God, who ought to be governed by your prayers and prudence, should be at variance. See Valesius, annotationes in Socratem.

† The original expression in this passage, *ει δε της επιστημης αρετη*, is rather obscure. The translation of Valesius, “in ipsâ scientiâ perfectione,” is followed by Shorting, who renders it, “in the very perfection of knowledge.” Musculus, in his version, gives “in virtute scientiæ,” and Grinæus, “disciplinæ causâ.”

that you, who are ministers of the Most High God, should be likewise unanimous in the profession of the same religion. But let us examine with more accuracy and attention what has been said ; let us ask, whether it be just and reasonable, on account of petty and idle disputes among you about words, that brother should be arrayed against brother, and that the venerable assembly, through your quarrels respecting things of so little importance, and by no means necessary, should be mutually estranged by an unholy contention. Such contentions are low and vulgar, and better suited to the ignorance of children, than becoming the gravity and wisdom of priests and discerning men. Let us voluntarily depart from the temptations of Satan. Our great God, the Saviour of all, has vouchsafed to every one a common light. Permit me, his servant, I beseech you, to terminate this affair, by the aid of his providence, that you, his people, may be recalled to unity in your public assemblies by my exhortations, my labors, and the urgency of my admonitions. For, as I have already remarked, you have one and the same faith, and one opinion concerning our religion ; and as the requisition of the law, in its various parts, urges all to an agreement of sentiment, the topic which has excited animosity and division among you, since it belongs not to the essence and life of religion in general, should by no means produce discord and sedition among you. And I say not these things by any means to oblige you to be of the same opinion, with regard to this very foolish controversy, or by whatever other term it may be denominated. For the honor and character of the assembly of Christians may be preserved entire, and the same communion retained among you all, notwithstanding you may greatly differ among yourselves in matters of very little importance, since all men have not the same understanding of every thing, the same turn of mind, or mode of thinking. Let there be, therefore, among you but one faith and mind concerning the providence of God, and one worship and service of the Deity. But your subtle disputes and inquiries respecting these most trifling matters, if you cannot agree

in sentiment, should remain in your own thoughts, and be laid up in the secret depths of the mind. Let your mutual friendship remain unshaken ; and be firm in your belief of the truth, and your obedience to God and his law. Return to mutual love and charity. Restore to the whole people their accustomed harmony. Purify your own hearts, and renew your former acquaintance and familiarity. It often happens that friendship is more pleasant when enmity is followed by reconciliation. Enable me again to enjoy quiet days, and nights undisturbed by solicitude, that in future the pleasure of the pure light, and the happiness of a tranquil life may be reserved for me. Otherwise, I cannot but sigh and lament, and be dissolved in tears ; nor can I pass without great disquietude the remainder of my days. For how can I look for repose, while the people of God, who serve the same Master as myself, are torn asunder by an iniquitous and fatal contention ? That you may comprehend the excess of my grief on account of this affair, I ask your attention to what I am going to say. Arriving lately at Nicomedia, I had determined to proceed immediately to the East. When I was hastening towards you, and had already performed the greater part of my journey, the news of your differences changed my resolution, lest I should be compelled to behold that with my eyes, of which I thought I could hardly bear the recital. Open therefore to me, by your agreement, a way into the East, which has been closed against me by your contentions. Permit me, as speedily as possible, to behold you and all others of the people happy and rejoicing, and to render, with you, due thanks to God for the common agreement and liberty of all.

C.

Letter of Arius to Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia.

To the most esteemed Lord, a faithful man of God, the orthodox Eusebius, Arius, unjustly persecuted by Pope* Alexander for the sake of truth, which overcomes all things, and which you also defend, greeting in the Lord.

My father Ammonius being about to visit Nicomedia, I thought it my duty to salute you by him; and at the same time to make known to you, as being naturally charitable and affectionate in your disposition towards the brethren, for the love of God and of his Christ, that we are vehemently opposed and persecuted, and every engine is set in motion against us by the bishop; so that he has even expelled us from the city as atheists, because we do not assent to such declarations as follow, publicly uttered by him.[†] God is always, the Son is always. The Father and the Son are co-existent. The Son, unbegotten, co-exists with God, and is always begotten; without being begotten, he is begotten: † nor does God precede the Son in thought, nor by a single moment. Always God, always the Son. From God himself the Son exists. Because Eusebius, your brother, bishop of Cesarea, and Theodotus and Paulinus, Athanasius, Gregorius and Aetius, and all the bishops of the East, affirm, that God, who is without a beginning, existed before the Son, they have

* In the earlier ages of the Church, the title of Pope, or father, was the common appellation of the bishops. But when the bishop of Rome afterwards usurped a spiritual supremacy over his brethren, this title, and some others, once bestowed indiscriminately on prelates, as such, being exclusively appropriated to him, acquired, of course, an additional emphasis.

† There appears to have been some confusion of ideas in the mind of the bishop, if his words are correctly reported by Arius. It is probable that this passage is intended to express what is called the "eternal generation" of the Son, a phrase, however, which, itself, may not be considered as remarkably pell-mellous. Possibly the original may, to some readers, be more clear than the translation. It is therefore added. ουνυπαρχει αγενητος ον υιος των Θεων, αειγενης εστιν, αγενητος εστιν.

been condemned, with the exception only of Philogonius, Hellanicus and Macarius, heretical men, and uninstructed in the faith ; who say, one, that the Son is an effusion ; another, that he is a projection ; and another, that, like the Father, he is unbegotten. We could not listen, indeed, to such impieties, although the heretics should threaten us with a thousand deaths. But what we ourselves say and think, we have already declared, and now declare, that the Son is not unbegotten, nor in any manner a part of the unbegotten, or of any matter subject to him ; but in will and designt he existed before all times and ages, perfect God, the only begotten, unchangeable ; and that he existed not, before he was begotten, or created, or determined, or established, for he was not unbegotten. We are persecuted, because we have said that the Son has a beginning. But God is without a beginning. On this account we are persecuted, and because we said that he is of things not existing. Thus we have said, because he is not a part of God, nor of any subjected matter. On this account we are persecuted. You know the rest. I hope that you are in health in the Lord, and that you remember our troubles, thou true disciple of Lucian, and truly pious man, as your name imports.

D.

*Letter of Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia, to Paulinus,
Bishop of Tyre.*

To my Lord Paulinus, Eusebius greeting in the Lord.

The zeal of my Lord Eusebius for the truth has not been concealed, but has reached even to us, nor has your silence, my Lord, on the same subject, been unnoticed. We naturally rejoiced on account of my Lord Eusebius, but were grieved

much by your reserve, considering the silence of so eminent a man as our own defeat. Wherefore, I exhort you, knowing as you do, how unbecoming it is in a wise man to think differently from others, and yet to suppress the truth, to exert your mental faculties, and commence writing on this subject, which would be useful both to yourself and your hearers, especially if you follow in the footsteps of scripture, and endeavor to write according to its words and meaning. We have never heard, my Lord, of two beings unbegotten, nor of one divided into two; nor have we learnt or believed that he could suffer any thing corporeal, but that there is one unbegotten, and another truly from him, and not made of his substance, by no means partaking of his nature, nor being of his substance, but altogether different in nature and in power, yet made in the perfect likeness of the nature and power of his Creator. We believe not only that his origin cannot be explained in words, but that it cannot be comprehended, we will not say by the understanding of man only, but by that of any beings superior to man. And we say this, not from our own reasonings, but instructed by the scriptures. That he is created and established, and begotten in the substance, ($\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\eta\tauο\tau\tau\eta\alpha$) in an immutable and inexplicable nature, and in the resemblance which he bears to his Maker, we learn from the very words of the Lord, who says—"God created me in the beginning of his ways, and formed me before the world, and begat me before all the hills." If then he was from him, that is, of him, as it were a part of him, or an emanation of the substance, he could not then be said to have been created or established. Nor can you indeed, my Lord, be ignorant of this. For that which is from an unbegotten being cannot be created nor founded by another or by the same, being from the beginning unbegotten. But if, because he is said to be begotten, it seems to be intimated, that he is derived from the substance of the Father, and has therefore a sameness of nature, we know that the scripture does not say that he alone was begotten, but also other things which differ altogether from

him in their nature. For it also says concerning men, "I have begotten sons and exalted them; but they have despised me," and, "thou hast forsaken God who begat thee." And of other creatures it says, "who is he that hath begotten the drops of dew?" This is not saying, that the nature of the dew is divine, but that all things which are made, proceed from the will of God. For nothing exists of his substance; but all things being made according to his pleasure, every thing exists in the manner in which it was made. For he is God, but those things which resemble him, are made so by the Word, according to his will, since all things are of God. And all things which are by him, are made by the Deity, for all things are of God. When you shall have read this letter, and have polished it according to the grace which you have received of God, write as soon as possible to my Lord Alexander. If you will take this trouble, I doubt not you will persuade him. Salute all the brethren in the Lord. May the divine favor preserve your health, and enable you to pray for us.

E.

Letter of Eusebius Pamphilus to the Church of Cesarea.

It is probable, beloved, that you have already learnt from another source, what has been done respecting the ecclesiastical faith in the great Council convened at Nice, as common fame usually outruns an accurate report of facts. But as a rumor of this kind may have represented things differently from what they actually were, we have thought it necessary to send you, first, the form of faith proposed by us, and afterwards that which was set forth by the bishops, who made some additions to ours. Our own form, then, which was read in the presence of the em-

peror, and appeared to be right and proper, is expressed in these terms. As we have received from the bishops who preceded us, —as we have been taught in the rudimental instructions of our childhood, and when we were subjects of the baptismal rite, and as we have learnt from the divine scriptures ; as we have believed and taught, both in the order of presbyter, and the episcopal dignity itself, and as we now believe, we present to you our profession of faith. And it is this. We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things, visible and invisible ; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, God of God, light of light, life of life, the only begotten Son, the first born of every creature, begotten of the Father before all ages, by whom all things were made ; who for our salvation was made flesh and conversed among men ; who suffered, and rose again the third day, and ascended to the Father, and will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. We also believe in one Holy Spirit ; believing every one of these to be and subsist, the Father truly the Father, the Son truly the Son, and the Holy Spirit truly the Holy Spirit ; as our Lord, when he sent his disciples to preach, said, “ Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” We solemnly affirm that we thus hold and thus think, and have so held formerly, and will hold even unto death, and will always continue in this faith, anathematizing every impious heresy. We testify before Almighty God and our Lord Jesus Christ, that we have believed this sincerely, and from the heart, from the time that we were capable of knowing ourselves, and now also truly think and speak, being prepared to show by sufficient proofs, and to convince your minds, that we have so believed in times past, and have preached accordingly.

Having made this representation of our faith, there was no pretence for contradiction. But our pious emperor himself was the first to declare, that it was extremely well conceived, and that it expressed his own sentiments, exhorting all to assent to, and sign it, that they might unite in its doctrines, with the ad-

dition only of the single word consubstantial ; which he himself explained by asserting that he did not use the term with reference to corporeal affections, and that the Son did not subsist from the Father, either by division or abscission, since it was impossible that an immaterial, intellectual and incorporeal nature could admit of any bodily affection ; but that it must be understood in a divine and mysterious manner. It was thus that our most wise and religious emperor argued on this subject. But the bishops, taking occasion from the word consubstantial, committed to writing the following form :—

THE CREED.*

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things, visible and invisible ; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance of the Father ; God of God, light of light, true God of true God ; begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father, by whom all things were made, both in heaven and in earth ; who for us men, and for our salvation, descended, was incarnate, and was made man, and suffered, and rose again the third day ; he ascended into heaven, and shall come to judge the living and the dead : And in the Holy Spirit. But the holy catholic and apostolic Church of God anathematizes those who affirm that there was a time when the Son was not, or that he was not before he was begotten, or that he was made of things not existing ; or who say, that the Son of God was of any other substance or essence, or created, or liable to change or conversion.

* The Greeks termed the symbol of faith *μαθημα*, because the catechumens learnt it by heart. Leontius Bisantius, in his work concerning sects, calls the Symbol, or Creed of Nice, *το μαθημα των εν Νικαιᾳ*.

When this form was dictated by the prelates, their expressions "of the substance of the Father," and "consubstantial with the Father," were not suffered to pass without examination. Hence, therefore, several questions arose, and answers were made, and the sense of these terms was carefully considered. They admitted that the words "of the substance" signified that the Son was of the Father, but not as a part of the Father. We thought it well to assent to this explanation, as conveying the pious doctrine, that the Son was of the Father; but not, however, a part of the Father. We therefore agreed to this opinion; nor did we reject the word consubstantial, having in view the promotion of peace, and being anxious to avoid a departure from the right belief. For the same reason, we approved also of the words "begotten, not made," since the word made, they said, was common to the other creatures which were made by the Son, and to which he has nothing similar; and that therefore he is not made like those who were created by himself, but is of a more excellent substance than any created being. The divine oracles inform us, that he was of the Father, by a mode of generation, which can neither be conceived nor expressed by any created intelligence.

The question whether the Son is consubstantial with the Father being thus examined, it was agreed that this was not to be understood according to the manner of material things, nor that of mortal beings, since it could be neither by division, nor abscission, nor by a change of the paternal essence and power, since the unbegotten nature of the Father is foreign from all these things. But by the expression "consubstantial with the Father" nothing else is intended, than that the Son of God has no similitude with created beings, but resembles in all things the Father only, by whom he was begotten, and that he is of no other substance or essence than that of the Father. The proposition being thus explained, we thought that we might justly accede to it; since we knew that some of the most learned and distinguished of the ancient bishops and writers had

made use of the term consubstantial, in treating of the divinity of the Father and the Son.*

This is what I intended to say concerning the faith which was declared, and to which we all gave our consent ; not, however, without inquiry and examination, but according to the senses adduced, which were discussed before our most religious emperor, and for the reasons already mentioned, unanimously approved. We also agreed without difficulty to the anathema put forth by the prelates, and subjoined to the form of faith, because it prohibits the use of unscriptural expressions, from which nearly all the confusion and disturbances of the Church have arisen. Since, therefore no divinely inspired writing has made use of the phrases, "of things not existing," and "there was a time when he was not," and others which are added to them, it did not seem proper that they should be spoken or taught. We therefore consented also to this salutary decree, not having been accustomed, in times past, to the use of such terms.

We have sent you this information, beloved, that we may clearly show you, with what care and deliberation we conducted our inquiries and examination, and gave our assent, and with how much reason we resisted at first, and continued our opposition to the last hour ; so long, indeed, as any thing being written otherwise than correctly, afforded occasion of offence. We finally embraced, without further contention, those expressions which were found to be unexceptionable, when, on a candid examination of the sense of the words, it appeared that they entirely agreed with those admitted by ourselves, in the exposition of faith which we at first proposed.

* This assertion of Eusebius, who must have had access to many ancient writings, which are now lost, sufficiently shows, that the word *ομοονοσίος* was not first invented by the Nicene Fathers, nor originally used by them, as many suppose, in discussing the subject of the divinity of the Son. Tertullian, in the beginning of his book against Praxeas, expressly says, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are of one substance, and affirms that this doctrine is contained in the rule of faith preserved by the Catholics. But wherein does the Latin phraseology, *uniuersus substantia*, differ from the Greek expression, *ομοονοσίον* ?

F.

The Synodical Epistle.

The bishops assembled at Nice, constituting the great and holy Synod, to the church of Alexandria, by the grace of God holy and great, and to the beloved brethren in Egypt, Lybia, and Pentapolis, greeting in the Lord.

Seeing that, by the grace of God, and the favor of Constantine, a prince greatly beloved by him, we have met together from various cities and provinces, and have holden a great and sacred Council at Nice, we considered it highly necessary that a letter should be sent to you from the holy Synod, that you might understand what things were proposed and examined, and what was decided and established. In the first place, then, the impiety and iniquity of Arius and his associates was inquired into, in the presence of our most religious prince, Constantine. It seemed good to all, that his ungodly opinion should be anathematized, and the blasphemous words and expressions which he made use of, saying, that the Son of God was from nothing; that there was a time when he was not; and that by his freedom of will he was capable of virtue and vice. He also called him a being created and made. All this was condemned by the holy Synod, who could not patiently listen to a doctrine so impious or absurd, and to language so blasphemous. You have already been made acquainted with the result of the proceedings against him, or will shortly be informed; and we would not seem to insult a man who has received the just reward of his own error. But so great was the influence of his impiety, that it involved Theonas, of Marmarica, and Secundus, of Ptolemais, in the same ruin with himself, for they shared the same condemnation.

But after the grace of God had delivered us from that pernicious opinion, from impiety and blasphemy, and from those men

who had the presumption to excite discord and divisions among a people heretofore at peace, the rashness and petulance of Meletius, and of those who had been ordained by him, still remained to be considered. And what was determined by the Synod with respect to these persons, we proceed, beloved, to make known to you. It seemed advisable to the council, who were moved by feelings of humanity towards Meletius, although in strict justice he merited no indulgence, that he should remain in his own city, but have no power either of ordination, or of designating candidates for orders, and should not appear in the country, or in any other city, under that pretence; but should retain the name only of his office.* Those, however, who were admitted by him to any clerical function, after being confirmed by a more sacred ordination,† were to be received into communion on this condition, that although they should retain their honors and ministry, they should always be ranked after those, who, being stationed in any parish or church, had been previously ordained by our most respected colleague, Alexander. They are not allowed to propose for ordination such as they may think suitable persons, or to suggest their names; or, indeed, to do any thing without the consent of some bishop of the Catholic Church under the jurisdiction of Alexander. Such, however, as, by the grace of

* It seems that Meletius had undertaken to confer orders in cases which did not belong to him; and had, moreover, infringed the ancient and universally received usage in regard to the ordination of bishops. For it was the custom, when any episcopal seat became vacant, for the bishops of the province, in the presence of the people, to elect and ordain a successor. But Meletius, wherever he happened to travel, made no scruple of instituting bishops, priests and deacons on his own authority. See Epiphanius, *de hæres.* 68.

† By a more sacred ordination, the synod intended, that the bishops and other clergy, who had been ordained by Meletius, should receive imposition of hands from Alexander. As they had been ordained without his consent, it was especially requisite that they should be consecrated by the bishop of Alexandria, according to ancient custom, which exacted obedience from all the bishops of the Egyptian diocese to Alexander, as their spiritual head.

God, and the aid of your prayers, have never been found in any schism, but have remained in the Catholic Church without spot, have the privilege of voting, and of proposing the names of such as may be worthy of admission into the clerical order ; and, in short, of performing whatever may be agreeable to ecclesiastical law and sanction. But if any of those who are in the Church should be removed by death, the office of the deceased is to be conferred on such as have recently been admitted to orders ; provided, however, that they appear to be worthy of the promotion, and be elected by the people ; whose choice, nevertheless, must be approved and confirmed by the bishop of Alexandria.* And this privilege was conceded to all the others. But with respect to Meletius, on account of his former irregular conduct, and the rashness and precipitancy of his temper, it was otherwise decreed ; that no power or authority should be given to a man, who might be able to renew the same troubles, which had existed before.

These are the transactions relating more particularly to Egypt and the most holy church of the Alexandrians. And if any thing further was resolved or determined, in the presence of our Lord, and most honored associate and brother, Alexander, he will himself the more accurately relate it to you, from having been a prominent actor and sharer in what was performed.

We moreover inform you of our unanimous agreement with regard to the most holy season of Easter, which was happily effected by the assistance of your prayers; so that all our brethren in the East, who formerly celebrated the passover simulta-

* This passage, says Valesius, evidently refers to the bishops who were ordained by Meletius, as well as to the presbyters and deacons. For if it only contemplates the promotion of one presbyter to the vacant place of another, why did the Nicene Fathers use so much caution ? Why did they make so many and such important preliminary requisitions ? Why so much solicitude in regard to the advancement of a presbyter merely ? Unquestionably, the words of the council have a more immediate view to bishops; in the election of whom, the suffrages of the people were necessary, and also a confirmation of their choice by the bishop of Alexandria, as the metropolitan of all Egypt.

neously with the Jews, will in future keep that festival in accordance with the Romans, with ourselves, and with all those, who from the earliest times have observed that solemnity with us. Rejoicing, therefore, on account of these happy regulations, and the peace and harmony which prevail, and also that every heresy is cut off, receive with the greater honor and warmer affection, our colleague, and your bishop, Alexander ; who by his presence has afforded us great satisfaction, and at so advanced an age has supported such arduous labors to restore peace among you. Pray also for us all, that what has been rightly established, may firmly continue, through Almighty God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, to whom be glory forever, amen.

G.

Letter of the Emperor.

Constantine, august, to the Catholic Church of Alexandria.

All hail, beloved brethren ! We have received a signal benefit from the divine providence, in that, being freed from all error, we acknowledge one and the same faith. Henceforth it will not be in the power of the devil to do any thing against us ; for all his insidious machinations are utterly removed. The splendor of truth, at the command of God, has vanquished those dissensions, schisms, and tumults, which invaded our repose, and, if I may so speak, the deadly poisons of discord. We all, therefore, believe that there is one God, and worship in his name.

That this happy state of things might be brought about, I called together in the city of Nice as many of the bishops as pos-

sible, with whom, as one of your number, and rejoicing exceedingly to be your fellow-servant, I undertook myself to examine into the truth. Whatever, therefore, might give occasion for controversy and dissension was accurately considered and discussed. May the Divine Majesty pardon the many and grievous expressions concerning our blessed Saviour, and our hope and life, which were indecorously and blasphemously uttered by some, who declared opinions contrary to the divine scriptures, and our holy faith, and professed to believe them. When, therefore, more than three hundred bishops, not less to be admired for their modesty, than for their talents and intelligence, confirmed one and the same faith, which is derived from the truths of the divine law accurately investigated, Arius alone, who first sowed this evil among you, and afterwards among others also, with impious design, was found to be overcome by diabolical art and influence. Let us receive, therefore, that doctrine which was delivered by the Almighty. Let us return to our beloved brethren, from whom this shameless minister of satan has separated us. Let us return to the common body and to our own members, with all diligence, since it is due to your prudence and understanding, to your faith and holiness, that, the error of this man, who is evidently an enemy of the truth, being demonstrated, you return to divine grace. For what was approved by three hundred bishops can only be considered as the pleasure of God, especially as the Holy Spirit, dwelling in the minds of so many and such worthy men, has clearly shown the divine will. Wherefore, let no one hesitate, let no one delay; but let all return with alacrity to the path of truth, that when, with all convenient speed, I shall visit you, I may offer, with you, due thanks to the Searcher of all hearts, that having made known to you the unadulterated faith, he has restored to you that mutual charity, which was so much to be desired.

May the Divine Being watch over you, my beloved brethren.

H.

Another Letter of Constantine.

Constantine, august, to the Churches.

Having experienced, in the flourishing state of public affairs, the greatness of the divine goodness, I thought it especially incumbent on me to endeavor that the happy multitudes of the Catholic Church should preserve one faith, be united in unfeigned love, and harmoniously join in their devotions to Almighty God. But this could not otherwise be effected in a firm and solid manner, than by an examination, for this purpose, of whatever pertains to our most holy religion, by all the bishops, or the greater part of them at least, assembled together. Having therefore convened as many as possible, I myself being present, and, as it were, one of you, (nor do I deny that I exceedingly rejoice in being your fellow-servant,) every thing was examined, until a unanimous sentiment, pleasing to God, who sees all things, was brought to light; so that no pretence was left for dissension or controversy respecting the faith.

When the question arose concerning the most holy day of Easter, it was decreed by common consent to be expedient, that this festival should be celebrated on the same day by all, in every place. For what can be more beautiful, what more venerable and becoming, than that this festival, from which we receive the hope of immortality, should be suitably observed by all in one and the same order, and by a certain rule. And truly, in the first place, it seemed to every one a most unworthy thing that we should follow the custom of the Jews in the celebration of this most holy solemnity, who, polluted wretches! having stained their hands with a nefarious crime, are justly blinded in their minds. It is fit, therefore, that, rejecting the practice of this people, we should perpetuate to all future ages the celebra-

tion of this rite, in a more legitimate order, which we have kept from the first day of our Lord's passion even to the present times. Let us then have nothing in common with the most hostile rabble of the Jews. We have received another method from the Saviour. A more lawful and proper course is open to our most holy religion. In pursuing this course with a unanimous consent, let us withdraw ourselves, my much honored brethren, from that most odious fellowship. It is indeed in the highest degree preposterous, that they should superciliously vaunt themselves, that truly without their instruction, we cannot properly observe this rite. For what can they rightly understand, who after the tragical death of our Lord, being deluded and darkened in their minds, are carried away by an unrestrained impulse wherever their inborn madness may impel them. Hence therefore it is, that, even in this particular, they do not perceive the truth, so that continually wandering in the grossest error, instead of duly reforming their calculation, they commemorate the passover twice in the same year. Why then should we follow those who are acknowledged to labor under a grievous error? for we will never tolerate the keeping of a double passover in one year. But if what I have said should not be thought sufficient, it belongs to your ready discernment, both by diligence and prayer, to use every means, that the purity of your minds may not be affected by a conformity in any thing with the customs of the vilest of mankind. Besides, it should be considered that any dissension in a business of such importance, and in a religious institution of so great solemnity, would be highly criminal. For the Saviour has bequeathed us one festal day of our liberation, that is, the day of his most holy passion; and it was his pleasure that his Church should be one; the members of which, although dispersed in many and various places, are yet nourished by the same spirit, that is, by the will of God. Let the sagacity of your holiness only consider, how painful and indecorous it must be, for some to be experiencing the rigors of abstinence, and others to be unbending their minds in convivial

enjoyment on the same day; and after Easter, for some to be indulging in feasting and relaxation, while others are occupied in the observance of the prescribed fasts. Wherefore, that a suitable reformation should take place in this respect, and that one rule should be followed, is the will of divine providence, as all, I think, must perceive. As it is necessary that this fault should be so amended that we may have nothing in common with the usage of these parricides and murderers of our Lord; and as that order is most convenient which is observed by all the churches of the West, as well as those of the southern and northern parts of the world, and also by some in the East, it was judged therefore to be most equitable and proper, and I pledged myself that this arrangement should meet your approbation, viz. that the custom which prevails with one consent in the city of Rome, and throughout all Italy, Africa and Egypt, in Spain, Gaul, Britain, Lybia, the whole of Greece, the diocese of Asia, Pontus and Cilicia, would be gladly embraced by your prudence, considering that not only the greatest number of churches exist in the places which have been already mentioned, but also that it is most religious and equitable that all should wish what the strictest reason seems to require, and to have no fellowship with the perjury of the Jews. And, to sum up the whole in a few words, it was agreeable to the common judgment of all, that the most holy feast of Easter should be celebrated on one and the same day. Nor is it becoming, that in so sacred an observance there should be any diversity; and it is better to follow that decision, in which all participation in the sin and error of others is avoided. This being the case, receive with cheerfulness the heavenly and truly divine command. For whatever is transacted in the holy councils of the bishops, is to be referred to the divine will. Wherefore, having announced to our beloved brethren what has been already written, it is your duty to receive and establish the arguments already stated, and the observance of the most holy day; that when I shall come into your beloved presence, so long desired by me, I may be

able to celebrate, with you, on one and the same day, the holy festival, and that in all things I may rejoice with you ; seeing that the cruelty of the devil is taken away by divine power, through my instrumentality, and that your faith, your peace and concord is every where flourishing.

May God preserve you, my beloved brethren.

I.

C A N O N S.

The whole number of canons, universally admitted to be genuine, which were framed by the Council of Nice, is twenty. All of these were translated, with a view to insertion among the documents. But as the work has been extended considerably beyond the original design, as the canons relate altogether to matters of discipline, and most of them would probably be of little general interest at the present time, it was determined, on consultation, to publish a few of them only, which are more particularly connected with the historical view, or which may otherwise seem to claim a preference. The reader who may wish to examine those which are omitted, is referred to the *Concilia Generalia et Provincialia, Colonie Agrippinæ, 1618*, page 275, from which the following are translated.

CANON IV.—*Of the Ordination of Bishops.*

It is highly proper that a bishop should be constituted such by all the bishops in the province ; or, if this should be difficult, either through any urgent necessity, or from the length of the journey, three, at least, meeting together, shall ordain the candidate, provided those who are absent shall also consent, and signify their approval by letter. The transactions, however, which may take place in every province must be confirmed by the metropolitan bishop.

CANON VI.—*Of the distinguished honors which were decreed to the chief Bishops in Ecclesiastical Government.*

Let the ancient usage prevail of Egypt, Lybia and Pentapolis, that the bishop in Alexandria have jurisdiction over all these provinces, since this is the custom with regard to the bishop in Rome.* In like manner, at Antioch, and in the other provinces, let the churches preserve their privileges. It is very clear, that if any one be made a bishop without the consent of the metropolitan, the great council has decreed that he ought not to be a bishop. But if through their own obstinacy two or three individuals oppose the election of a candidate, it being just and conformable to the ecclesiastical canon, the vote of the majority shall prevail.

CANON VII.—*Of the Bishop of Ælia. (Jerusalem.)†*

Since custom and ancient tradition require that the bishop of Ælia be held in veneration, let him have the next degree of honor to the metropolitan, without prejudice to the appropriate authority of the latter.

* Here, again, it appears, that the bishop of Rome had no pre-eminence at the period of the Nicene council, being placed on the same footing only as the other metropolitan prelates.

† Jerusalem having been destroyed by Titus, a colony was afterwards established on its ruins by Adrian, and the place was then called Ælia. As a new city, it was of no great importance, and was under the jurisdiction of Cesarea, the metropolis of Palestine. The Christian world, however, was not unmindful of its antiquity, and of the interesting events of which it was the scene. Especially was it remembered as the sacred spot, where that divine religion, which was one day to be extended throughout the world, was first proclaimed by our Lord and his apostles. For these reasons the bishop of Jerusalem was thus distinguished, and Eusebius has preserved the succession of prelates in that city, as well as those in the other apostolic sees.

CANON VIII.—*Of those who are called Cathari, that is, the Pure.*

Respecting those, formerly calling themselves Cathari, who have acceded to the holy Catholic and apostolic Church, it seemed good to the great and holy council, that receiving the imposition of hands, they may thus continue in the clerical order. But above all things, it is proper that they should promise in writing to approve and follow the regulations of the holy apostolic Church, that is, that they will communicate with those who may have contracted a second marriage, and with those who, in a period of persecution, have fallen from the truth, but to whom a time is fixed and a season appointed for repentance; that they may observe in all things the decrees of the Catholic Church. Wherever therefore, they alone may be found ordained, whether in villages or cities, they shall remain in the same order, to which they had been admitted. But if any of them come to a place where there is a bishop or a presbyter of the Catholic Church, it is evident that the bishop of the Catholic Church, shall have the episcopal dignity. But he who is called a bishop by the Cathari, shall have the rank of a presbyter, unless it shall seem fit to the bishop to share with him the honor of the title; but if otherwise, he shall provide for him the place of a country bishop, ($\chiωρεπισκοπού$) or of a presbyter, that he may by all means appear to be in the number of the clergy, and that there may not be two bishops in one city.

CANON XIII.—*Of those who solicit Communion at the point of death.*

Concerning those who depart this life, the ancient and ecclesiastical law shall now also be observed, that if any one is about to expire, he may not be deprived of the viaticum of the Lord. But if, in despair of life, having received the communion, and partaken of the offering, he be again numbered with the living,

let him be placed with those who participate in prayer only. By all means, however, let the bishop impart the offering to every one, on examination, who desires, at the point of death, to partake of the eucharist.

CANON XV.—*Of the inexpediency of removing from one city to another.*

On account of the frequent tumults and seditions which arise, it is decreed, that the custom which exists in some parts, contrary to the canon, be entirely taken away ; so that no bishop, priest or deacon, be permitted to migrate from one city to another. If any one after this determination of the holy synod, shall attempt any such thing, or shall engage in a business of this nature, such a proceeding shall be rendered altogether void, and he shall be restored to the church of which he has been ordained bishop, priest or deacon.

CANON XVI.—*Of those who do not remain in the churches to which they have been appointed.*

Whoever, not having the fear of God before their eyes, and disregarding the ecclesiastical canon, shall rashly withdraw from the church, whether they be priests or deacons, or in any other ecclesiastical order, such persons ought by no means to be received by any other church, but should be compelled to return to their own parishes ; and those who are obstinate, should be deprived of the communion. If any clergyman should presume to invade what belongs to another, and be ordained in his church, without the consent of the bishop from whom he had withdrawn, such ordination shall be null and void.

CANON XVIII.—*Of presbyters receiving the eucharist from deacons.*

It having come to the knowledge of the great and holy council, that in certain places and cities, the eucharist is administered by deacons to presbyters, and neither law nor custom permitting that those who have no authority to offer the body of Christ should deliver it to those who have; and it being also understood, that some deacons receive the eucharist before even the bishops, let therefore all these irregularities be removed, and let the deacons remain within their own limits, knowing that they are ministers of the bishops, and inferior to the presbyters. Let them receive the eucharist in their proper place, after the presbyters, whether it be administered by a bishop or presbyter. Nor is it permitted to deacons to sit among the presbyters, as that is against rule and order. If any one will not obey, even after these regulations, let him desist from his ministry.*

*The order of deacons was instituted to serve tables, and chiefly the table of the Lord. It is mentioned by Justin Martyr, towards the close of his second apology for the Christians, that they were employed to carry the bread and wine to such communicants as were absent. They had the administration of the offerings, and of all the temporal concerns of the churches. The poor received from their hands the alms of the faithful, and the clergy, their stipends and remuneration. All this was adapted to increase their consequence, and gave them, says Fleury, a kind of authority over the priests. The council of Arles had already begun to check the aspiring views of the deacons, by prohibiting that order, in their eighteenth canon, “ut diaconus nihil sine presbytero suo agat,” from taking upon themselves any functions belonging to the priests.

ERRATA.

At page 7, line 9, for 'Thebias,' in a few copies, read Thebais. Page 8, line 1, for 'having built a palace in that city a short time before the reign of Diocletian,' read 'where Diocletian had built a palace a short time before.' Page 19, note, for 'heræeos,' read 'hæreos. Page 23, reference, at the foot, for 'Phil. I. 2.' read 'Phil. II. 2.' Page 27, line 18, for 'is directed to the churches in general,' read 'is particularly addressed to the church of Alexandria,' and in line 21, reverse the expression. Page 35, note, for 'prefered,' read 'preferred.' Page 36, line 24, for 'Camelion-like,' read 'Chameleon-like.'

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